Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Canceled)

2. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the exhaust manifold further comprises a flare section expanding from the straight pipe section to the downstream end of the exhaust manifold.

3. (Currently Amended) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 2, wherein an expanding angle of the flare ~~sectionis~~ section is smaller than or equal to 60°.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Currently Amended) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the exhaust branches connected to the first combined ~~branchare~~ branch are branches to be connected with two of the cylinders of the engine which are not consecutive in a firing order of the engine, and the exhaust braches connected to the second combined ~~branchare~~ branch are branches to be connected with two of the cylinders of the engine which are not consecutive in the firing order of the engine.

6. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein, in each of the first and second combined branches, the two exhaust branches meet at a confluence angle smaller than or equal to 20°.

7. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the first and second combined branches meet at a confluence angle smaller than or equal to 20°.

8. (Currently amended) An engine exhaust apparatus comprising:

an exhaust manifold which comprises:

a plurality of exhaust branches extending toward a confluence portion, from respective upstream ends to be connected with cylinders of an engine; and

a straight pipe section extending from the confluence portion at which exhaust streams in the exhaust branches merge, toward a downstream end adapted to be connected to an exhaust purifying catalyst;

a first combined branch into which two of the exhaust branches merge together; and

a second combined branch into which other two of the exhaust branches merge together, where the first and second combined branches merge together at the confluence portion into the straight pipe section;

wherein an upstream end of the second combined ~~branchat~~ branch at which the other two of the exhaust branches meet is located on an upstream side of an upstream end of the first combined ~~branchat~~ branch at which the two of the exhaust branches meet.

9. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the exhaust branches connected to the second combined branch extend laterally toward each other.

10. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein first and fourth branches are connected to the first combined branch, and second and third branches are connected to the second combined branch, the first, second, third and fourth branches are the exhaust branches for first, second, third and fourth cylinders, respectively, of the engine which are arranged in a row so that the second and third cylinders are located between the first and fourth cylinders in the row.

11. (Previously presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 10, wherein the second combined branch comprises a straight section.

12. (Previously presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 11, wherein the first combined branch comprises a straight section shorter than the straight section of the second combined branch.

13. (Previously presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 12, wherein the straight sections of the first and second combined branches extend side by side to the straight pipe section; and the first combined branch is located between the second combined branch and the upstream ends of the exhaust manifold.

14. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the downstream end of the exhaust manifold is adapted to be connected with the exhaust purifying catalyst in such a manner that an angle between a center line of the straight pipe section and a center line of the exhaust purifying catalyst is smaller than or equal to 30°.

15. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein the engine exhaust apparatus further comprises the exhaust purifying catalyst including a thin-wall catalyst carrier of ceramic having a wall thickness smaller than or equal to 3 mil.

16. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 8, wherein an exhaust valve opening timing is set in a range from 30° before a bottom dead center to the bottom dead center of the engine.

17. (Canceled)

18. (Currently Amended) An engine exhaust apparatus comprising:

an exhaust ~~manifoldwhich~~ manifold which comprises:

first, second, third and fourth exhaust branches adapted to be connected, respectively, with first, second, third and fourth cylinders of an engine which are arranged in a row so that the second and third cylinders are located between the first and fourth cylinders in the row of the cylinder;

a straight pipe section extending downward from an upstream end portion toward a downstream end of the exhaust manifold adapted to be connected to an exhaust purifying catalyst;

a first combined branch including an upstream end portion into which the first and fourth exhaust branches merge together, and a straight section extending downwards from the upstream end portion of the first combined branch to the upstream end portion of the straight pipe section and

a second combined branch including an upstream end portion into which the second and third exhaust branches merge together, and a straight section extending downwards from the upstream end portion of the second combined branch to the upstream end portion of the straight pipe section, the straight section of the second combined branch being longer than the straight section of the first combined branch.

19. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the straight sections of the first and second combined branches are separated from each other by a wall, the straight sections of the first and second combined branches extend straight along an imaginary straight line into the upstream end portion of the straight pipe section, and the straight pipe section extends straight along the imaginary straight line.

20. (Previously Presented) The engine exhaust apparatus as claimed in Claim 18, wherein the engine exhaust apparatus further comprises the exhaust purifying catalyst including a catalyst carrying carrier having thin walls extending in a longitudinal direction of the exhaust purifying catalyst, and the straight pipe section extends in such a direction as to cause an exhaust gas stream to flow in the longitudinal direction of the exhaust purifying catalyst, from the exhaust manifold into the exhaust purifying catalyst.